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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 003782

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STATE PASS AIT/W

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: CSB HITS CONSTITUTION THEMES ON CAMPAIGN TRAIL

REF: TAIPEI 2662

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas Paal, Reason: 1.4 (B/D)

11. (C) Summary: President Chen Shui-bian told an audience on November 27 that he will "terminate the Chinese constitution" during his second term of office regardless of international pressure. Chen, appearing on the same stage as former President Lee Teng-hui, told the group that if the voters give the Pan-Green a majority on December 11, he would ensure the enactment of a "New Taiwan Constitution" by 2008, which would be approved via a public referendum. Chen stopped short of endorsing Lee's call for creating an entirely new constitution, however, insisting that whether it was "revision" or "creation" of a constitution, the content mattered more than the process. Reaction from the Pan-Blue was divided. KMT Chairman Lien Chan reiterated that Chen should "have the guts" to call for a referendum on Taiwan independence on December 11. KMT Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou, however, publicly downplayed Chen's remarks as simple campaign rhetoric, asserting that the president would back off after the election. Chen is likely to reiterate his constitution themes in the final two weeks of the campaign, despite efforts by his advisors to steer him toward the political center. End Summary.

12. (C) President Chen Shui-bian told an audience on November 27 that he will "terminate the Chinese constitution" during his second term of office, "no matter how much international pressure there is." Speaking at an international conference hosted by the Lee Teng-hui affiliated Taiwan Advocates think tank, Chen said that if the Pan-Green secured a legislative majority on December 11, he will ensure the enactment of a "New Taiwan Constitution" on May 20, 2008. Chen asserted that this constitution would be subject to a referendum in 2006 (note: this is required under the draft constitutional amendments passed by the Legislative Yuan in August, 2004, reftel). The president compared Taiwan's use of the 1947 "ROC" constitution meant for all of China to "a child wearing adult clothes." Chen sidestepped calls from Lee for Taiwan to establish a completely new constitution (zhixian), stating that what is important is the content of constitutional reform, not the terminology for the change.

Lee Teng-hui: Revisions Are Not Enough

13. (C) Speaking at the same event, former President Lee criticized plans to simply "revise" the constitution, asserting that only a whole-scale rewrite of the document will allow Taiwan to have a constitution appropriate to current realities. Lee continued that revisions would also fail to address the core problems of territorial definitions contained in the current constitution. At a rally in Miaoli County the same day, Lee told a crowd that Taiwan needed a new constitution in order to finally break its linkages to China, drawing a parallel between the United States and Great Britain.

Pan-Blue: Understanding and Provocations

14. (C) Pan-Blue reactions to Chen's statements diverged sharply. KMT Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou told reporters that the president's statements were simply campaign rhetoric aimed at strengthening his core political base. He expressed confidence that the president would not follow through on his campaign statements after the election due to pressure from the U.S. He also urged people to "have understanding" over the president's political predicament, including pressure from former President Lee. Other Pan-Blue leaders reacted sharply, with KMT Chairman Lien Chan reiterating his demand that Chen "have the guts" to call for a referendum on Taiwan independence on December 11. People First Party (PFP) Chairman James Soong lashed out at both Chen and Ma, denouncing "those Pan-Blue officials who would express 'understanding' over the DPP's attempts to promote Taiwan independence."

15. (C) Mayor Ma told the AIT Director on November 29 that the Pan-Blue leadership's attempts to respond to Chen's rhetoric simply played into the DPP's hands. Despite Ma's public dismissal of Chen's constitution plans, the mayor asserted privately that he remains concerned over how the issue will

be dealt with after the election, especially if the Pan-Green seizes a majority on December 11. Ma said, however, that he would push for the KMT to play an active and constructive role on constitutional reform over the coming two years to ensure that the issue does not threaten Taiwan's security.

Other Inflammatory Remarks

16. (C) In addition to his Taiwan Advocates speech, Chen offered a series of other problematic formulations on the campaign trail over the November 27-28 weekend. At a rally in Kaohsiung County, Chen stated that if the KMT refused to change its party symbol to something other than the national symbol, the Pan-Green would use its LY majority to find a new national symbol. At an appearance in Hualien County, Chen also challenged "those who claimed that the Republic of China" encompassed the entire territory of the Mainland, Tibet, and Mongolia. "The Republic of China isn't that big, and can never be that big," he told the crowd. At the same appearance, he also reiterated his recent formulation that the "PRC is a different country."

NSC Spin: Trying to Steer for the Center

17. (C) National Security Council Secretary General Chiou I-jen told the Deputy Director on November 25 that the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is trying to steer away from the pro-independence fringe in the final two weeks of the campaign in order to win over centrist voters. He asserted that the DPP refused a request from Lee's Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) for Chen to attend a December 5 "name rectification" rally in order to distance the DPP from the TSU's radical agenda. Chiou added that as a compromise, the

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DPP agreed to have Chen and Lee appear together at an evening campaign rally for Pan-Green candidates in Kaohsiung City on December 4. However, he did not expect that Chen would use the venue to push on sensitive subjects like the constitution. (Comment: Chiou did not mention at the time that Chen would be appearing together with Lee at the Taiwan Advocates conference this past weekend. End Comment.)

Comment: Same Message

18. (C) Chen has returned to the cycle of rhetorical gamesmanship that has become the hallmark of his campaign style. While Chen often plays to the crowd with Taiwan-first themes, his willingness to push the envelope is most apparent when standing on stage together with Lee. Chen's aides acknowledge this and say they will try to keep the president away from temptations during the final days of the campaign. Based on his track record, it is more likely that Chen will continue to play the Taiwan sovereignty card until voting day on December 11. Afterwards, he will send a team of DPP spokespersons to the U.S. to try to control any damage done in the election.

PAAL